

Step by step procedure to apply USFWS zip-tie propagation, USFWS zip-tie falconry, and State/Territory zip-tie falconry bands.

Please note, USFWS zip tie Propagation bands are yellow, USFWS zip tie Falconry bands are black. State zip-tie falconry band colors are selected by the state. USFWS propagation bands are issued by the USFWS, whereas USFWS zip tie Falconry and State/Territory zip tie Falconry bands are issued by the State/Territory.

Read through the steps below before working with the raptor so you are aware of how the band should fit.

Step 1) Your bird will need to be calm, and/or hooded. Some raptors do not like to have their feet touched, so you may need someone helping you. Apprentice falconers should have their sponsor physically present to assist.

Tools needed:

- Permanent ink pen,
- Sharp knife, or razor edged box cutter
- Cutting board,
- Emory board (or small file)
- Small wire cutters
- State/Territory or USFWS issued zip tie band
- Clear soft plastic tubing with hole diameter sized to the band (can be purchased at most hardware stores, or sometimes is supplied by USFWS/State/Territory)

Again, it is important to read the steps below BEFORE working with the raptor so you are aware of how the band should fit.

It is extremely important that you measure the tubing carefully (see Step 2). A band that is too tight will cause serious health issues to the bird. A band that is too loose will go over the anklet or toes and could cause injury.

Both issues are avoided by having made proper measurements before the band is permanently applied.

A zip-tie style band should be put on a bird with requisite clear plastic tubing; **there are no circumstances where a bird would be banded without tubing, as the tubing stops the zip tie from accidentally over-tightening, and protects the birds leg from sharp plastic edges.**

Step 2) Using the tubing, determine circumference of the raptor's leg ABOVE the top of the anklet. If there are no anklets, measure the fit around the tarsus above the toes. **The band must be able to spin freely around the leg.** Note the diameter at the location on the leg where the band will sit, and find a cylinder that is approximate to that size (either exact, or very close), such as a sharpie, ballpoint pen, pencil, straw, etc. of various sizes.

Use the selected cylinder to determine the size of the tubing needed, and mark the tubing at the correct size with a permanent ink pen. Note the length of the tubing as it curves around the circumference of the leg. It may take two people to accomplish this step.





Step 3) Cut the plastic tubing to size, and slip over the zip-tie band. Best to measure twice, and cut once. Record the number of the band, note time and date of banding, and store that information in a safe place (data book, weight book, 3-186A, etc.). Use your fingers to gently pre-bend the tubing/band to the approximate circumference of your bird's leg around your selected cylinder.



Step 4) Hold the band with the tubing around the leg to ensure the fit. Re-cut the tubing if necessary. The band must be able to spin freely, but not be too loose so that it goes over the ankle, or down over the toes. If in doubt, measure the tubing again. Remember, with zip tie bands, tightening is one-way, and once you start to hear/feel the zip tie grab, you will be unable to remove the band to start again.

Gently put the zip tie around the bird's leg ABOVE the ankle.



Step 5) Tighten the zip tie gently until the plastic tubing is snug against the large end of the zip tie on both sides. Do not over-tighten.

The band, with tubing, must freely spin on the tarsus, and be above the anklet, and never below (!!!). This prevents the band from cutting into the leg when the bird bates while tethered. The band should be snug enough that the band cannot travel through the anklet and end up low on the tarsus. If the band is too tight, you must remove it, and obtain a new band from the USFWS or State/Territory.

If the band is too loose, you may be tempted (BUT SHOULD NOT) to gently cut away several mm of plastic tubing while the band is on the bird; this correction would be extremely difficult and/or hazardous to the bird as you could unwittingly cut a tendon.



Step 6) Trim the end of the zip tie with a small wire cutter. Use an emery board or small file to ensure there are no sharp corners remaining from the zip tie. Remember, the band must spin freely.

Step 7) Final step; file necessary electronic paperwork with State/Territory and/or USFWS. Check the band after 24 hours to ensure the fit is correct. Check the fit of the band during every health check of the bird.

If you have questions, please contact your State/Territory Falconry Administrator or permit biologist, or the USFWS Division of Migratory Bird Management permit biologist who sent you the band.

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